

The Builder.

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AST week we endeavoured to make known to our readers the nature and character of some of the more recently published collections of Gothic Architectural Exemplars. In our present number we would in like manner bring before them two or three new books connected with the art of painting, to which we have not yet had an opportunity to refer, namely, Mrs. Merrifield's translation and notices of ancient "Original Treatises on the Arts of Painting," published by Murray; "The Picture Collector's Manual," by Jas. R. Hobbes, published by Boone; and Mr. Henry Twining's "Philosophy of Painting," published by Longman.

Hazlitt scoffs at the "ambiguous quackery of rules" for the production of beauty; they have been called the "fettors of genius," and many inquirers who do not repudiate them altogether, are undetermined as to what extent they may be made available. There can be no reasonable doubt, however, as to the utility, and indeed necessity, of guiding principles. Rules are no substitute for genius, but without them genius may waste itself or be perverted; and as to their being fettors, says Reynolds, "They are fettors only to men of no genius, as that armour, which upon the strong is an ornament and defence, upon the weak and misshapen becomes a load, and cripples the body which it was made to protect."

We are glad, therefore, to find the theory of art occupying the attention of competent minds, and augur from it much advantage. "Theory," remarks Mr. Twining, "would indeed be worse than useless in the art of painting, were it to claim, as its special office, to rule the inspired thought, and to assert principles of grace in the lively creations of the fancy. Its advantages are chiefly shown in correcting the errors, and in chastening the productions, of those who want the penetration and experience necessary to proceed unguided. A more extended knowledge of the principles on which art is founded, might not add many to the best of the yearly productions of our artists, although it might diminish immensely the number of the inferior ones; and by thus rendering the attainment of that which is at least genuine and good, more easy and certain, it doubtless confers a benefit on art in general, which ascends less obstructed, and, it may be, to a loftier position, when seated on the foundation of truth, than when based on inconsistency, chance, or extravagance."

Mrs. Merrifield's work relates to the technical part of painting, and is a most satisfactory testimony to the learning, accomplishments, and ability of the author.* Mrs. Merrifield was deputed in 1845 to proceed to the north of Italy for the purpose of collecting MSS. relative to painting, with the view, principally, of ascertaining the processes and

methods of oil-painting adopted by the Italians. On Mrs. M.'s return, Sir Robert Peel entrusted to her the publication of the MSS., with an intimation that part of the expenses would be defrayed by Government; and this book is the result. As a matter of course, much of the information given in these MSS. is practically useless, although in an antiquarian and historical point of view the whole are valuable.

Prefixed, Mrs. Merrifield has given an interesting sketch of the history and technical processes of the different kinds of painting and other arts which are alluded to in the manuscripts.

The MSS. given are those of Jehan le Begue (fifteenth century); Petrus St. Audemar (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries); Eraclius, Archerius (fourteenth century); the Bolognese MS. (fifteenth century); the Paduan MS. (beginning of seventeenth century); the Brussels MS., written by P. Lebrun, 1635, and some others.

Mrs. Merrifield has executed the task confided to her very satisfactorily, and fully justified Sir Robert Peel's selection.

"The Picture Collector's Manual," besides being a dictionary of painters, supplies an omission which has long been felt, namely, an alphabetical list of the various pupils, imitators, and copyists, arranged under the heads of the different masters. There is also a classification of subjects, showing the names of those who painted in the several departments of art, thus affording, as the author says, "in all uncertain cases, a clue by which the judgment may be guided, the opinion strengthened, and the doubt [sometimes] removed." A want of care in the collation of dates is observable, and is to be regretted. Thus the death of Lucas de Cranach, who was born 1472, is put in the year 1586, but in truth took place in 1553; and Cuyt appears to have been born in 1768, and to have died in 1649!

In plan, however, the work is excellent, and, in spite of what we have said, we do not hesitate to recommend it for purchase.

The author concludes his Introduction, which consists of a brief description of the various schools, with the following outline of the characteristics of a few of the principal masters:—

"Titian's lights are generally in the centre; his shadows are broad and extended; his middle tints in the extremities of his figures, such as the hands, feet, &c., are of a reddish brown; those parts most distant from the light, are weakened in colour, and have a dusky appearance; his receding figures, and those on the outside of his groups, are always the most obscure; his dead colours are made with cold middle tints, and finished by laying on warm colours, extremely thin, light, and transparent; his middle tints of shadows are thinly covered with yellow, and in the darker parts with red and black; he used but little white in his lights, and none at all in obscured parts of his pictures: whilst Raffaele used it largely, he is neither so bright in his lights, nor dark in his shadows as other masters; and in the old men of Rubens and Titian the principle appears to be the same, little or no white in the carnation, and a sort of orange colour, made up with yellows and reds; in historical compositions, his great light is in his skies and behind his figures,—he does not affect a whiteness and glitter when the light is thrown upon the fleshy part in his female figures: it shines but is subdued, and not opposed to dark shadow in obscure parts. Conceive a scale of colouring between the chalky hard manner, and the opposite extreme of obscurity, the

strongest light being at No. 1; we then arrive at this comparison: Guido's strongest light on the flesh is at No. 1, his middle at No. 3, and his dark at the extreme; Titian's strongest light is at No. 2, his middle at 3, and his dark at the flesh; Agostino Carracci's are at 3, and his middle at 1; and Vandyck's are almost as strong as those of Guido, but his strongest shadows are off the flesh, and in the draperies and backgrounds."

"The Philosophy of Painting" is a continuation of a work by the same author, Mr. Twining, entitled "Elements of the Pictorial," printed originally for private distribution only, and which was reviewed in our columns some time ago. The present volume is divided into three parts. The first is appropriated to remarks on the elementary principles which constitute the Beautiful, and those conducive to the perception of the Beautiful, and includes an analysis of the views entertained by various authors on the same subject. The second part comprises the consideration of subjects connected with imitation in painting, such as composition, expression, light and shade, styles, &c.; and the third part treats of linear perspective, projected shadows, and the perspective of reflections.

This work is the result of personal observation and thought, rather than of reference to the writings of others, and requires, for its due mastery, the corresponding exercise of thought by the reader. Those who will give this will find it eminently suggestive, and will not fail to derive from it much advantage. Mr. Twining is an enthusiastic lover of art, and for his disinterested efforts to advance the knowledge of it, is entitled to our praise,—he has his return, however, in the enjoyment the pursuit affords.

To all our readers we say, as we have often said before, cultivate a knowledge of art,—improve your taste,—and as one of the best means of doing this, lose no opportunity of exercising the eye by examining fine specimens of art. As Leigh Hunt remarks, in his pleasant "Book for a Corner," "We have reason to regard the having been conversant with a house full of paintings during childhood, as one of the blessings of our existence. We have never since entered a room of that sort without a tendency to hush and move softly, as if in the presence of things above the ordinary course of nature, of spirits left behind them by great men, looking at us with divine eyes, or informing the most beautiful visions of nature with art as wonderful."

ON THE BUILDING MATERIALS EMPLOYED IN PARIS AND IN THE VALLEY OF THE LOWER SEINE.

At the present day, when the attention of the profession has been so powerfully directed to what may be called the physiology of the materials employed in the execution of the works committed to their charge, it may be interesting to examine the practice of the architects in the neighbouring capital. Such an examination, moreover, becomes more interesting from the comparatively superior attention paid by the French architects and engineers to the study of the philosophy of the mechanical parts of their pursuits. With the glorious exceptions of Rennie, Tredgold, Barlow, and Hodgkinson, nearly all that we know of the chemical and mechanical nature of the materials we have to employ is derived from the works of the French authors. The practical lessons they have drawn from their researches become, therefore, of much more immediate importance; and, although, the geological nature of the country in which they are applied differs so entirely from that of our

* "Original Treatises, dating from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries, on the Arts of Painting in Oil, Miniature, Mosaic, and on Objects of Gilding, Dyeing, and the preparation of Colours and artificial Gems; preceded by a general Introduction, with Translations, Prefaces, and Notes." By Mrs. Merrifield. In two volumes. London, John Murray, 1846.

* "The Picture Collector's Manual, adapted to the Professional Man and the Amateur; being a Dictionary of Painters, containing 1,800 more names than in any other Work." By J. R. Hobbes. 2 vols. London, 1849. T. and W. Boone.

* "On the Philosophy of Painting: a Theoretical and Practical Treatise; comprising Reflections in reference to Art, the application of Rules to Practice, and general Considerations on Perspective." By Henry Twining, Esq. London: Longman and Co. 1849.